



DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

FINANCIAL AID DEVELOPMENTS

By Kim Slote, Assistant Associate

ABILITY TO BENEFIT TEST

On Dec. 7, 2020, the USDE published an [Electronic Announcement](#): Texas Success Initiative Assessment – Ability to Benefit Test Reporting. The announcement provides clarification on how to report the results of this new ATB Test that was provisionally approved Nov. 9, 2020. Since there is not a code for the TSI Assessment in the Common Origination and Disbursement System, schools are advised to submit an alternate “Ability to Benefit Test Code” value of “05 – Computerized Placement Tests/ACCUPLACER”. The value will be used for both tests. The COD System will be updated with an additional “Ability to Benefit Test Code” value in the future.

TECHNICAL

There were several electronic announcements published by the USDE in Dec. 2020 related to website and mobile updates. The announcements are listed below with the date of publication.

- [Next Gen FSA – Updated myStudentAid Mobile App now Available – Dec. 7, 2020](#)
- [Quarterly SAIG Message Class File Update – Dec. 11, 2020](#)
- [Access Removed for Unconfirmed TG Numbers \(SAIG Mailboxes\) and](#)

[Electronic Services User Accounts – Dec. 14, 2020](#)

- [2020-2021 COD System Peak Processing Reminders – Dec. 15, 2020](#)
- [COD School Testing for the 2021-2022 Award Year – Dec. 15, 2020](#)
- [Patch File Available for Direct Loan Tools for Windows, Release 20.0 to Resolve Rebuild Issue – Dec. 21, 2020](#)
- [Mandatory Software Upgrade – Deadline Extension to Apr. 17, 2021 to Maintain Access to the SAIG](#)

TRAINING

An [Electronic Announcement](#) was published by the USDE Dec. 7, 2020: Stay Engaged with On-Demand Access to the 2020 Virtual FSA Training Conference. Federal Student Aid hosted a virtual training conference Dec. 1-4, 2020. Over forty recorded sessions are available for on-demand viewing on the conference platform until March 2, 2021. Individuals will need to register for the conference to view the on-demand sessions, PowerPoint presentations and question and answer documents. Visit the FSA Training Conference website at <https://fsaconferences.ed.gov/> to get started.

DIRECT LOAN PROGRAM



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The USDE published an [Electronic Announcement](#) Dec. 18, 2020: William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program Reconciliation. Specific information is provided in this announcement to assist schools with reconciling the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program. Both the Financial Aid Office and the Business Office should review this announcement. It is mandatory that Direct Loan reconciliation be conducted monthly per 34 CFR 685.300(b)(5). Questions and answers are provided in an attachment.

CYBERSECURITY

On Dec. 18, 2020, the USDE published an [Electronic Announcement](#): Protecting Student Information – Compliance with CUI and GLBA. This announcement informs institutions and their third-party servicers of upcoming activities to ensure compliance with the National Institute of Standards and Technology Special Publication 800-171 Rev. 2, *Controlled Unclassified Information in Nonfederal Systems*. All postsecondary institutions are encouraged to implement NIST 800-171 controls to protect Controlled Unclassified Information used to administer Title IV student aid programs. This security standard supports continuing obligations under the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. Information on the multi-year phased implementation of the requirements is outlined in the announcement.